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SUBJECT: ISTANBUL BRINGS NGO EXPERT TO ADDRESS TRANSPARENCY,  
VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

¶1. Summary: As part of mission's ongoing support of Turkish NGO development, PAS Istanbul designed an April 30 - May 7 program with U.S. Speaker Alan Kumamoto, Partner of Kumamoto Associates and board member of NCIV Los Angeles. Kumamoto reached a wide variety of grassroots organizations, civic society groups as well as municipalities through a series of workshops and lectures, providing examples from the U.S. on operations, fundraising, volunteerism, networking and strategic planning. In addition, Kumamoto addressed the leadership and 30 members of Deniz Feneri, Turkey's largest Islam-oriented relief and charity organization. The presentation on transparency in fundraising proved to be particularly timely since the Deniz Feneri office in Germany was raided in mid-April and is currently under financial investigation. Turkey's Deniz Feneri denies any "organic" affiliation with the Germany-based organization. End Summary.

¶2. Kumamoto's April 30 - May 7 visit came during one of the most politically turbulent weeks in Turkey in recent memory. On April 29, the day before his arrival, well over one million secularists demonstrated against the Islam-oriented Justice and Development (AK) party in Istanbul. On May 1, police clashed with protestors commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of "bloody" May Day, which had resulted in the deaths of 34 civilians. On May 3, the Government announced that early parliamentary elections would be held on July 22. The fact that our NGO and municipality contacts were able to pull themselves away from their television screens and - especially on May 1 - spend hours in traffic trying to circumvent police barriers to get to the Consulate, was a strong testament to the NGO community's interest in learning from the U.S. experience.

¶3. The two workshops organized at the U.S. Consulate were particularly important in bringing together 75 representatives from many NGOs - both secular and Islam-oriented - and in providing an opportunity for networking and experience sharing, resulting in several joint project ideas. Given the political events of the previous two weeks, the tension between the secularists and the pro-government supporters was palpable, but the discussions were nevertheless respectful and productive.

¶4. Kumamoto also addressed the leadership and 30 members of Turkey's largest Islam-oriented relief and charity organization, Deniz Feneri. Coincidentally, German police in mid-April raided the Deniz Feneri office in Frankfurt on the suspicion of money laundering. We therefore asked Kumamoto to stress in his remarks the importance of transparency and controls. Deniz Feneri Turkey issued a press release denying any "organic" affiliation with the Germany-based organization. It does, however, admit to having received funds from the German group and distributing them to needy Turkish families --- with, the press release emphasizes, the permission of the Turkish Interior Ministry. Kumamoto delivered another lecture on the fundraising at Koc University, one of the most prominent private universities in Turkey.

¶5. In addition to the NGO programs, the Istanbul Beyoglu and Bursa

(an industrial city 235 kilometers south of Istanbul) municipalities organized lectures on "Neighborhood Associations and Community Outreach" looking at U.S. examples of public, private and NGO partnerships. NGOs as well as the representatives of other municipalities in the provinces of Istanbul and Bursa also attended the events. The Beyoglu mayor, a recent International Visitor Leadership Program participant, organized the event in his municipality after learning about Los Angeles's Neighborhood Associations during his IV program. The turnout of 45 or so municipality and NGO representatives in Bursa was somewhat disappointing as we had been told to expect an audience of around 150. However, the director of the organizing body, Agenda 21, told us that several anti-American NGO representatives had urged others to avoid the event, as the speaker was funded by the U.S. Consulate. Nevertheless, the smaller format was successful, as it allowed the group to ask detailed questions about specific issues of interest to them.

¶6. Comment: Apart from supporting the development of civil society in Turkey and stressing the importance of transparency and controls, the program was important in reaching diverse groups and introducing them to U.S. culture. Kumamoto proved to be an excellent and professional speaker, very warmly received by our NGO and municipality contacts.

JONES